

## Chapter 11 — Evaluation According to Federal Criteria

NPS has ten suggested criteria to assess whether an area qualifies as a NHA. This section lists the ten criteria (in italics) and explains a Delta NHA, as outlined in this feasibility study, in the context of each criterion.

*1. An area has an assemblage of natural, historic, or cultural resources that together represent distinctive aspects of American heritage worthy of recognition, conservation, interpretation, and continuing use, and are best managed as such an assemblage through partnerships among public and private entities, and by combining diverse and sometimes noncontiguous resources and active communities.*

The Delta contains an assemblage of natural, historic, and cultural resources throughout its geographic span which represent the region's nationally significant heritage. These include museums, historic districts, public parks, recreation areas, agritourism facilities, and more. The Delta Protection Act of 1992 was specifically developed to help preserve the resources which make the Delta a places of statewide, national and international significance, including its agricultural lands, wildlife habitat, open space, levees, cities, towns, waterways, marinas and more. These resources are unique and valuable in regards to current activities and future opportunities for conservation, enhancement, continuing use, heritage interpretation and/or education. However many of the facilities open to visitors have limitations in terms of their marketing abilities, hours of operation, and options for expansion due to limited staffing and financial resources. Currently there is no facilitator organization in the Delta which links these different sites together. An organization such as that could help with tasks of regional marketing for tourism and leisure activities, developing physical and organizational linkages, and improving visitor access and understanding. Through public and private partnerships, a Delta NHA could be a tool to help recognize and promote a regional identity, and also help specific sites gain visibility which are valuable parts of the American story.

*2. Reflects traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife that are a valuable part of the national story.*

As the proposed themes have illustrated, there are many levels in which the Delta's traditions, customs, beliefs, and folklife are a valuable part of the national story. Due to the Delta's geographical location and its precious natural resources, the Delta has attracted persons from around the world who have utilized and shaped the landscape in ways that are unmatched anywhere else in the United States. Techniques and equipment developed for Delta agriculture and reclamation have been used throughout the world to help revolutionize these practices. A number of ethnic groups that established communities in the Delta still recognize their heritage in events or museums, including the Dai Loy Museum in Locke, the Isleton Asian Celebration, and the Rio Vista Holy Ghost Festa. Other annual

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festivals in the Delta reflect the pride that residents have for Delta resources such as; the California Duck Days in the Yolo Bypass, the Courtland Pear Festival, and the Rio Vista Bass Derby.

### *3. Provides outstanding opportunities to conserve natural, cultural, historic, and/or scenic features.*

The Delta is a unique and valuable resource spanning portions of five counties in northern California at the confluence of the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers. The Delta is an integral part of California's water system as its watershed provides over twenty-three million Californians and around four million acres of farmland with potable water. Additionally, it is an important habitat area for a large diversity of flora and fauna, an important stopover location along the Pacific Flyway, and a critical corridor for anadromous fish. It is also an incredibly rich agricultural area of regional, national, and international importance.

Despite its significance, the Delta is not well known to outsiders, even to people as close as the San Francisco Bay Area, Sacramento region, and Stockton. Many people benefit from the Delta, but are unaware of its existence. A Delta NHA could help educate people about its importance, and could build support in preserving, protecting, and enhancing the Delta.

As discussed, there are many natural, cultural, historical, and recreational resources in the Delta. A Delta NHA could be a tool to link the visitor sites together in order to assist with regional marketing, and therefore potentially lead to an increase in recognition of these areas, which in turn could help sustain the sites economically and conserve their resources. Additionally, as outlined in this study, a Delta NHA would be a tool to develop valuable partnerships for undertaking projects aimed at sustaining the Delta's key sites which contribute to the recognition, enhancement, and promotion of 'Delta as a Place'.

### *4. Provides outstanding recreational and educational opportunities.*

The Delta is a predominantly rural landscape lying in the midst of major metropolitan areas, and is a prime area for outdoor recreation by both Delta residents and urban dwellers from the surrounding cities. Ever since steamboats began traveling the Delta's waters during the Gold Rush, the Delta has been used as a major center for outdoor recreation. While numerous public and private recreational facilities exist throughout the Delta, efforts could be made to enhance both physical and organizational linkages amongst these areas for marketing and promotional purposes.

Public education has also been discussed as an important goal of a Delta NHA. Due to the Delta's prime location between urban centers, it can serve as an important educational area both for both

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students in structured educational programs, as well as for leisure travelers. Education projects may include interpretive panels, outdoor learning facilities, museum displays, thematic tours, etc. Topics for education programs could include ecology and wildlife, agriculture, water resources, immigrant communities, reclamation, and more.

*5. The resources important to the identified theme or themes of the area retain a degree of integrity capable of supporting interpretation.*

The region contains a collection of museums, historic structures, and natural areas which retain integrity for interpretive opportunities to support the understanding, education, and appreciation of the Delta as an evolving place.

*6. Residents, business interests, nonprofit organizations, and governments within the proposed area are involved in the planning, have developed a conceptual financial plan that outlines the roles for all participants including the federal government, and have demonstrated support for designation of the area.*

The DPC was established by the Delta Protection Act of 1992 and has a mission to adaptively protect, maintain, and where possible enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment which includes but is not limited to agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities. The DPC has a membership of 15, with predominantly local representation, and if NHA designation is granted the DPC can utilize its membership and existing network of local stakeholders to develop a management plan which is representative of the diverse interests and capabilities of the region. A TAC and a SAC would be formed to ensure that the necessary perspectives and expertise are brought to the table; as well as regular participatory planning activities open to the general public for input throughout the development of the NHA management plan.

This feasibility study has consisted of comprehensive public outreach and engagement with a variety of organizations representing local residents, local businesses, recreation, agriculture, Delta history, local government, and more. Through study team meetings, public meetings, stakeholder interviews, public review memos, public presentations, and more; residents and stakeholders have had significant involvement in the development of this feasibility study.

Due to the current uncertainties of funding from both public and private sources, financial planning for a Delta NHA is conceptual. Specific federal funding awards vary, but at a minimum \$150,000 per year for the first three years can be anticipated, with a likely increase in annual appropriations after the federal approval of a NHA management plan. The management entity must be capable of

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meeting a 1:1 cash matching requirement. The DPC has a strong history of acquiring grant funding for various projects, including the Delta Trail and Working Landscapes, and a good understanding of potential funding sources which could be sought. As the management entity, the DPC will work to develop MOUs with partner organizations to help meet the cash match requirements through fundraising activities.

Support from a variety of stakeholder groups, local governments, agencies, and nonprofits has been expressed for a Delta NHA. The DPC has received numerous letters of support, as well as partnership commitments, which can be found in Appendix 7.

*7. The proposed management entity and units of government supporting the designation are willing to commit to working in partnership to develop the heritage area.*

Contra Costa, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Solano counties have all provided letters of support for a Delta NHA, which include commitments to the DPC to participate in various aspects of NHA development.

*8. The proposal is consistent with continued economic activity in the area.*

Recreation and tourism are key drivers of the Delta economy, with roughly 12 million visitor days of use annually, a direct economic impact of more than a quarter of a billion dollars in visitor spending, and support of about 3,000 jobs in the five Delta counties. Despite its current contributions, significant constraints exist to Delta recreation and tourism, including the lack of a regional identity, and limited access to recreational areas. Goals of a Delta NHA include the identification of the Delta as a region of national significance; the development of necessary visitor amenities to assist with public access; economic development; and the promotion of heritage tourism, agritourism and ecotourism in the Delta.


*9. A conceptual boundary map is supported by the public.*

Two boundary alternatives had been proposed as part of this process; one consisting of the Delta Primary Zone with a few add-ons, and the other consisting of much of the Legal Delta, plus Suisun Marsh and Carquinez Strait. The topic of the NHA boundary was discussed through the public process and correspondence was received from Delta counties and other entities on the topic. Through these activities and communications, significantly more support was expressed for the second boundary alternative. Therefore DPC staff has made the recommendation to use the second boundary alternative, with the addition of the city of Rio Vista due to the city's relevant resources and their desire to be included.

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*10. The management entity proposed to plan and implement the project is described.*

The proposed management entity is the DPC, which is a locally recognized agency in the Delta, with a predominantly local membership and an extensive network of local stakeholders to whom it conducts regular outreach to. The DPC would work closely with partner organizations on project planning, implementation, and fundraising. Additionally, a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and a Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC) would be formed to provide regular input throughout the process. Local agency staff whose jurisdiction includes falls within the NHA boundaries, including staff from all five Delta counties, would be invited to serve on the TAC. Members from a spectrum of local stakeholder groups (representing recreation, businesses, cultural and natural resources, landowners, agriculture, etc.) would be invited to serve on the SAC. Additionally, regular public meetings and workshops would be help to ensure opportunities for public engagement amongst local Delta stakeholders.



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